

CITIZENS OF HEAVEN

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Philippians 3:20-21 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

The following is adapted from John Phillips' commentary on Philippians:

The word translated 'conversation' is *politeuma*, which refers to the seat of government in the country of which we are citizens (*polites*) and in which we have certain rights and responsibilities. Citizenship was highly prized in an empire made up mostly of slaves and freed men. Paul enjoyed the rare privilege of being a Roman citizen. Yet he was far more proud of being a citizen of glory.

Our citizenship too is in glory. This citizenship is open to all who will enthrone the King of glory as sovereign, Savior, and Lord. We Christians belong to the aristocracy of Heaven where our Lord reigns at the right hand of God, and we have a responsibility in this present world never to disgrace our homeland.

And what a homeland it is! In our country the streets are paved with gold, the walls are built of jasper, and the gates are made of pearl. A rainbow-circled throne, a crystal stream, foundations ablaze with gems, many mansions, and the tree of life are there. Sickness, death, and pain do not haunt our country's streets, and no hospitals, prisons, asylums, or retirement homes can be found. This land of fadeless day is eternally bathed in the sunshine of God's smile. No sobs or signs are ever heard--just anthems of praise, doxologies of bliss, and songs expressing 'joy unspeakable and full of glory' (1 Peter 1:8). The citizens--all most gloriously fair--are served by angels commissioned by the throne to minister to salvation's heirs.

The eternal passport to that city is obtained through repentance and faith in the cross-work of Jesus Christ.

Right now we are pilgrims and strangers in a foreign land. This world is not our final home. We are here as Heaven's ambassadors. Every night we pitch our tent a day's march nearer home. We are never to forget even for a moment where our citizenship lies. The thought of that fair land and its all-glorious King will influence our dress and our deportment. It will help determine what we say, where we go, how we behave, what pleasures we permit, how we invest our talent, what we do with our money, how we treat other people, and the amount of time we spend in worship, service, Bible study, and prayer.

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